



Grafton Sustainability Commission
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2020 MAY 12 PM 1:29

GRAFTON SUSTAINABILITY COMMISSION
Meeting Minutes
February 27, 2020

A regular meeting was called to order at 7:12 p.m. The following members were present:

Edward Prisby (chair), Mark Haddad (vice-chair), Amy Marr (clerk), Angie Correia, Martin Jahn, Pamela Hill, Barry Smith

Benchmarking Report

Mr. Prisby opened the discussion around the data collected thus far. There are some inconsistencies with regard to how communities report FTEs, for example, making it difficult to compare apples to apples. There is apparently always an inconsistency in the way municipalities and DOR report numbers. That is why the introduction to the report contains a caveat statement regarding how the data is sourced. Some of the fiscal years are different, so caution must be exercised to ensure the comparisons are correct. The committee discussed a few data points collected to date that are inconsistent and need to be reconciled.

The committee also discussed "sister communities" and how DOR doesn't have a definition and there is not a lot of consistency. Mr. Prisby would like to get into how our "sister communities" are being determined by the administration. Mrs. Marr reminded the committee that the school comparisons were chosen by the committee, first based on geographic proximity (Millbury, Shrewsbury, Westboro) and then based on similarity in the Combined Effort Yield data point (Ashland, Bellingham, Holliston). Ms Hill expressed concern about data overload, especially on the municipal side due to having so many comparison communities. Mr. Prisby agreed and stated that the report is going to need to make comparisons on a smaller scale - not all areas will require mention of all municipalities. A few data points were discussed with regard to their usefulness and accuracy, such as cost of living, housing cost index, %residential+open space vs. %commercial + industrial + personal (Grafton being a 90/10 community, with 91% of value in the former category and 9% in the latter).

The committee went through the municipal spreadsheet line by line and discussed questions, including such areas as spend on various categories, Chapter 70 and 90 monies. Mr. Prisby wants the committee to compare capital planning processes and expenditures across the communities as

well in order to perhaps learn from other communities what is working better or worse. He suggested that perhaps we don't need this information from all eleven "sister" communities, and the committee decided on Ashland, Auburn, Holliston, Northboro, Millbury, Shrewsbury, Sutton, and Uxbridge. Mr. Prisby reviewed a few more data points he wishes to add in the report, including salaries for administration on municipal side (TA/ATA), superintendent salaries, debt service, capital as percent of budget.

The committee reviewed the current draft of its benchmarking report and future steps.

Review and Accept minutes

A motion was made by Barry Smith to approve the minutes of January 23. Motion seconded by Mark Haddad. The motion carried unanimously.

Next Meeting

March 12, 2020, 7pm. (Edit: this meeting ended up being cancelled)

Adjournment: At 8:35pm, a motion was made by Mark Haddad to adjourn. Motion seconded by Pam Hill. The motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Amy L. Marr, Clerk
Grafton Sustainability Commission